



Research Division Note #29 - February 17, 1988

ARTIST EMPLOYMENT IN 1987

1,503,000 Americans were employed in eleven artist occupational groups in 1987--an increase of 4.5 percent (64,000 persons) from 1986--according to data released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) in January 1988. This was more than double the employment growth in artist occupations recorded in 1986. Employment growth in 1987 for all Professional Specialty Occupations and for All Civilian Workers was 3.7 percent and 2.6 percent, respectively.

The combined unemployment rate for artist occupations decreased 0.6 percent from 4.1 percent in 1986 to 3.5 percent in 1987. The decrease in the unemployment rate for the combined artist groups was larger than that for Professional Specialty Occupations (0.2 percent), but not as large as that for All Civilian Workers (0.8 percent).

Among the individual artist occupations, unemployment rates increased for actors/directors, musicians/composers, painters/sculptors/craft artists/artist printmakers, and photographers; but decreased for the occupations of announcers, architects, authors, designers, teachers of art, drama and music (higher ed.), and artists not elsewhere classified. Unemployment rates for dancers were not calculated because the number of persons in this occupation group is too small for reliable estimates.

The 1987 artist labor force (1,558,000 employed and unemployed artists) increased by 3.9 percent from 1986. This increase was greater than the change for Professional Specialty Occupations (3.5 percent) and for All Civilian Workers (1.7 percent).

Employment Trends

Overall civilian employment has increased rapidly since 1983 and unemployment has declined as the national economy continued its expansion and recovery from the 1981-82 recession. Employment among the combined artist occupations also increased since 1983 (the first year in which the present classification system was used), and at a pace (22.9 percent) nearly twice that of total civilian employment (11.5 percent). Professional Specialty Occupations employment increased 12.5 percent between 1983 and 1987. The unemployment rate for All Civilian Workers declined from 9.6 percent in 1983 to 6.2 percent in 1987, for Professional Specialty Occupations the decline was from 3.0 to 2.0 percent and for artists the decline was from 6.0 to 3.5 percent.

The employment trends since 1983 for individual artist occupational groups were somewhat mixed. Teachers of art, drama and music (higher ed.), for example, showed a decline in employment of nearly 5 percent from 1983 to 1987. On the other hand, employment for both dancers and announcers increased by over 50 percent during this time period. For actors and directors the increase was 47 percent. The following paragraphs describe in more detail the changes for the individual artist occupation groups over the last year and over the five year period from 1983 to 1987.

Actors and Directors - While the unemployment rate for this group increased between 1986 and 1987, from 7.7 percent to 9.8 percent, the 1987 rate was substantially below the 1983 rate of 15.7 percent. Furthermore, the number of employed actors and directors in 1987 (88,000) was 46.7 percent greater than the number employed in 1983. The actors and directors labor force grew by 38 percent from 1983 to 1987.

Announcers - The unemployment rate for announcers declined from 5.9 percent in 1986 to 4.7 percent in 1987 and the number of employed announcers increased from 55,000 to 59,000. Since 1983, the number of employed announcers has increased by over 55 percent--the largest percentage increase in employment among artist occupations. The unemployment rate for announcers decreased from 6.7 percent to 4.7 percent over the period.

Architects - Employment for architects rose to 135,000 in 1987, an increase of 3,000 from 1986; and unemployment was 1,000, down by 2,000. Consequently, the unemployment rate for architects declined from 1.9 percent to 1.0 percent in 1987. Since 1983, employment among architects has increased 31 percent, while unemployment has declined by 80 percent. This has resulted in a dramatic decline in their unemployment rate--from 4.3 percent in 1983 to 1 percent in 1987. It should be remembered that the employment of architects follows general business cycles to an important degree and 1983 was a year of high unemployment nationally as a result of the 1981-82 recession.

Authors - The number of employed authors increased from 75,000 to 85,000 in 1987. Unemployment among authors declined from 2,000 to 1,000. This resulted in a substantial unemployment rate decline--from 2.6 percent to 0.8 percent. The number of employed authors rose from 62,000 in 1983 to 85,000 in 1987, and their unemployment rate declined from 2.5 percent in 1983 to 0.8 percent in 1987. It should be noted, however, that much of the employment in this occupation is self-employment and often is at low earnings levels.

Dancers - The employment level for dancers did not change over the year and remained at 15,000 in 1987. However, this was 50 percent higher than the employment level for dancers in 1983. The labor force for dancers also increased substantially--from 12,000 in 1983 to 16,000 in 1987. The sampling error is large for dancers because of the extremely small size of this occupation group (less than half the labor force size of the next smallest artist occupation). As a result, reliable estimates of unemployment rates for dancers are not possible from this data base.

Designers - The number of employed designers rose by almost 10 percent between 1986 and 1987--increasing from 484,000 in 1986 to 531,000 in 1987. Unemployment among designers declined from 20,000 in 1986 to 15,000 in 1987. As a result, the unemployment rate dropped from 4.0 percent to 2.7 percent. Since 1983, the number of employed designers has increased by more than one-third and the number of unemployed designers has declined by almost a third. This resulted in a steep decline in unemployment rate from 5.2 percent to 2.7 percent.

Musician/Composers - The number of employed musicians/composers increased from 164,000 in 1986 to 169,000 in 1987. The number of unemployed musicians, however, also rose from 7,000 to 8,000. This resulted in an increase in the unemployment rate for musicians/composers from 3.9 percent to 4.7 percent. Not only did the unemployment rate for musicians/composers increase over the year, but musicians/composers had one of the smallest increases in employment among artist occupations since 1983. 14,000 more musician/composers were employed in 1987 than in 1983--an increase of only 9 percent. The number of unemployed musicians did, however, decline by almost 47 percent. Their unemployment rate in 1983 was 8.6 percent compared to 4.7 percent in 1987.

Painters/Sculptors/Craft Artists/Artist Printmakers - 191,000 painters/sculptors... were employed in 1987 compared with 189,000 in 1986. Unemployment among painters/sculptors... also increased by the same amount. The unemployment rate rose from 2.7 percent to 3.4 percent between 1986 and 1987. Furthermore, painters/sculptors... was the only artist occupation group to have a higher unemployment rate in 1987 than in 1983. The number of unemployed painters/sculptors... rose between 1983 and 1987 from 6,000 to 7,000. The increase in employment for painters/sculptors over this five year period was only 5,000, less than 3 percent. As for authors, there is substantial self-employment in this occupation at low earnings levels.

Photographers - Photographers not only had a drop in employment over the year from 127,000 in 1986 and to 126,000 in 1987, but also a 25 percent increase in the number unemployed. This was the only artist occupation that had both a drop in employment and an increase in unemployment over the year. As a result, the unemployment rate for photographers increased

from 2.7 percent in 1986 to 4.0 percent in 1987. Since 1983, however, photographers have shown an increase in employment, although not as large as in many other artist occupations. Employment for photographers increased by 11.5 percent over the five year period (from 118,000 to 126,000) and unemployment decreased by 17 percent (from 6,000 to 5,000). This resulted in a decline in the unemployment rate for photographers from 5 percent to 4 percent.

Teachers of Art, Drama, and Music (higher ed.) - The employment situation for teachers of art, drama, and music in institutions of higher education was essentially unchanged in 1987 compared to 1986. Their unemployment rate declined slightly from 1.9 percent to 1.6 percent as did the number of employed teachers from 42,000 to 40,000. Similarly, from 1983 to 1987 there was very little change. The unemployment rate for teachers of art, drama and music dropped only slightly from 2.2 percent to 1.6 percent over the time period. Their employment level in 1987 (40,000) was slightly below their 1983 level (42,000).

Other Artists (not elsewhere classified) - Employment declined substantially for other artists (not elsewhere classified) from 1986 to 1987. 6,000 fewer persons were employed in this broad occupation group in 1987 that includes such diverse artists as puppeteers, magicians, acrobatic performers, etc. However, the number of unemployed persons in this category declined by an even larger percentage (50 percent) than the number employed (8.6 percent). This resulted in a drop in their unemployment rate from 7.8 percent to 4.5 percent. Since 1983, only 3,000 additional jobs became available in this occupation group, an increase of less than 5 percent. Unemployment among this group, however, was 40 percent lower in 1987 than in 1983.

CAVEATS: This Research Division Note on artist employment trends is the fifth employing the new Occupational Classification System put into effect in the Current Population Survey in 1983. The changes improve the consistency and accuracy of the artist occupational groups. Care should be used in comparing these data with data from earlier years in Research Division Reports and Notes when the previous Occupational Classification System was in effect (see Research Division Note #7).

Table 1. Artist Labor Force, Employment and Unemployment
1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, and 1987

Occupation	1987	1986	1985	1984	1983
Total All Civilian Workers	119,865,000	117,834,000	115,462,000	112,544,000	111,550,000
Employed	112,440,000	109,597,000	107,150,000	105,005,000	100,834,000
Unemployed	7,425,000	8,237,000	8,312,000	8,539,000	10,717,000
Unemployment rate	6.2%	7.0%	7.2%	7.5%	9.6%
Professional Speciality					
Occupation	14,726,000	14,228,000	13,946,000	13,679,000	13,219,000
Employed	14,426,000	13,911,000	13,630,000	13,286,000	12,820,000
Unemployed	300,000	317,000	316,000	343,000	399,000
Unemployment rate	2.0%	2.2%	2.3%	2.5%	3.0%
All Artists	1,558,000	1,500,000	1,482,000	1,418,000	1,301,000
Employed	1,503,000	1,439,000	1,411,000	1,351,000	1,223,000
Unemployed	55,000	61,000	71,000	67,000	78,000
Unemployment rate	3.5%	4.1%	5.0%	4.7%	6.0%
Actors and Directors	98,000	93,000	91,000	78,000	71,000
Employed	88,000	86,000	77,000	68,000	60,000
Unemployed	10,000	7,000	14,000	10,000	11,000
Unemployment rate	9.8%	7.7%	15.4%	13.3%	15.7%
Announcers	62,000	58,000	54,000	59,000	41,000
Employed	59,000	55,000	51,000	55,000	38,000
Unemployment	3,000	3,000	3,000	4,000	3,000
Unemployment rate	4.7%	5.9%	5.3%	6.2%	6.7%
Architects	136,000	135,000	131,000	109,000	108,000
Employed	135,000	132,000	130,000	107,000	103,000
Unemployed	1,000	3,000	1,000	2,000	5,000
Unemployment rate	1.0%	1.9%	2.2%	1.8%	4.3%
Authors	86,000	77,000	71,000	72,000	64,000
Employed	85,000	75,000	70,000	71,000	62,000
Unemployed	1,000	2,000	1,000	1,000	2,000
Unemployment rate	.8%	2.6%	1.4%	1.4%	2.5%
Dancers	16,000	18,000	17,000	14,000	12,000
Employed	15,000	15,000	15,000	12,000	10,000
Unemployed	*	"	"	"	"
Unemployment rate	"	"	"	"	"
Designers	546,000	504,000	504,000	466,000	415,000
Employed	531,000	484,000	484,000	448,000	393,000
Unemployed	15,000	20,000	20,000	18,000	22,000
Unemployment rate	2.7%	4.0%	3.9%	3.9%	5.2%
Musicians/Composers	177,000	171,000	163,000	174,000	170,000
Employed	169,000	164,000	152,000	161,000	153,000
Unemployed	8,000	7,000	11,000	13,000	15,000
Unemployment rate	4.7%	3.9%	6.5%	7.3%	8.6%
Painters/Sculptors/ Craft Artists/and Artist Printmakers	198,000	194,000	207,000	220,000	192,000
Employed	191,000	189,000	200,000	212,000	186,000
Unemployed	7,000	5,000	7,000	8,000	6,000
Unemployment rate	3.4%	2.7%	3.2%	3.5%	3.3%
Photographers	131,000	131,000	134,000	128,000	119,000
Employed	126,000	127,000	129,000	123,000	113,000
Unemployed	5,000	4,000	5,000	5,000	6,000
Unemployment rate	4.0%	2.7%	3.5%	3.9%	5.0%
Teachers of Art, Drama, and Music (higher ed.)	41,000	43,000	42,000	41,000	43,000
Employed	40,000	42,000	41,000	40,000	42,000
Unemployed	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Unemployment rate	1.6%	1.9%	2.4%	2.4%	2.2%
Other Artists**	67,000	76,000	66,000	57,000	66,000
Employed	64,000	70,000	62,000	54,000	61,000
Unemployed	3,000	6,000	4,000	3,000	5,000
Unemployment rate	4.5%	7.8%	5.8%	5.8%	7.1%

* Data base is too small for reliable estimate
** Not elsewhere classified

All the unemployment rates shown in the table (with the exception of the rates for 'All Artists') were calculated by the Bureau of Labor Statistics using rounded data. Therefore, calculating unemployment rates using the rounded levels for unemployed and labor force shown in the table may yield slightly different rates.

Source: Unpublished data provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

